

LakeSmart 2011

Year one: A Real Success!

By Laura Shore

In its first summer on the water, LOWDPOA's LakeSmart Program was a huge success! The LakeSmart Team of Sam Warden and Laura Shore visited over 400 cottages and covered an extensive portion of the Lake of the Woods district. Our environmental message focused on healthy shorelines as 90% of all lake life is born, raised and fed in this area supporting a thriving ecosystem of plants, insects, amphibians, birds, mammals and fish. Erosion and runoff associated with an unhealthy shoreline can result in debris and pollutants making their way into the lake, which in turn have an effect on water quality.

We spoke to almost 100 cottage owners about their specific shoreline issues and dropped off more than 300 information packages to those who were not home. Many members recognized the Lake Smart boat and were keen to talk about their shorelines. Some even invited us in for lunch! The amazing weather gave us considerable time on the water, allowing us to cover large portions of Lake of the Woods from the Northern end to Sioux Narrows in the South, to Bigstone Bay and Northern Harbour area in the East, Clearwater Bay and Ptarmigan Bay area in the West. We were also able to reach out to smaller lakes such as Longbow and Malachi Lake.

Common concerns from cottagers included the status of the water quality, what products are safe to use in and around the cottage, how to counter existing erosion, how to make additions to the cottage/dock without tampering with the environment, and of course how to stop the deer from feeding on everything in sight. Unfortunately we don't have an answer to that question!

It wasn't just Sam and I in the LakeSmart boat this summer. We also had many people come on board including our President, **Barry Baltessen** who donned his LakeSmart gear to visit with cottagers on the lake. We would like to say a big thank you to **Leslie Alexander**, who donated her time and boating skills to allow the team to reach out to cottagers and members on Malachi Lake. Our invasive species technician **Elauna Boutwell** was busy collecting water samples and past president **Don Cameron** was around to have a look at some of our samples from Anicinabi Park. Board member **Miran Strizic** greeted us Sioux Narrows and was a real trooper, as we had high winds that day and he spent most of it soaking wet! Past president **Art McKenzie** also spent time with us in Sioux Narrows, pointing us in the right direction and introducing us to cottagers in the area. Another big thank you to **Jim Johansen**, for inviting us to be a part of the breakfast club in Sioux Narrows – you do a fantastic job and it was great to be there! **Terry Rees** from FOCA (Federation of Ontario Cottage Associations) came all the way from Peterborough to spend a day with the team, and provided some great feedback regarding his experience with a similar program in Muskoka Lakes.

LakeSmart was all over the news this summer and we have to thank the local media for their terrific support. **Jessica Cable** from the Daily Miner and News joined us for a day on the water to see what the program is all about. **Shelley Bujold** from CJBN brought her camera along on a beautiful sunny morning to capture the team in action, and we even had a guest appearance from **Shane Lunny** who put his directing expertise to work!

Many cottagers took advantage of the program by making appointments with us to help with specific areas of concern on their property. Our input was well received and each cottager was left with a suggested action plan to address the problem.

The new LakeSmart initiative would not have been possible without the tremendous partnerships with our local businesses. Woodlake Marine provided us with a Lund 1825 Rebel XL Sport with a Mercury 90hp 4st motor and the City of Kenora provided us with docking space at the Harbourfront. KMTS supplied us with phones and airtime to help ensure the safety of the team and The Wharf Marina helped us cover fuel costs for the summer. The Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation and Dock on a Rock (an innovative dock building foundation) also played an important role in the program.

It has been a fantastic, action packed summer and an amazing job. We learned a lot and hope that we were able to help spread the word on the importance of healthy shorelines in the area. Thank you to LOWDPOA and all members and non-members who took the time to chat with the LakeSmart team. Keep an eye out for us again next summer!